

Mansfield Threatens Floor Fight For New C.I.A. Watchdog Panel

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WASHINGTON, June 11—Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana said today that unless a backstage compromise was reached soon on more extensive supervision of the Central Intelligence Agency, he would take the issue to the floor for a showdown battle.

In such a battle, the Senate Democratic leader said, "fearful things might be said that would not help the agency or the Senate."

It was to avoid such a fight that Mr. Mansfield has sought in the last 10 days either to get the leaders of the opposing factions—Senator Richard B. Russell, Democrat of Georgia, and J. W. Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas—to reach agreement, or to get the President to use his discretionary powers in effecting a solution to the problem.

But Senator Mansfield acknowledged that he had made "no progress" on a compromise. Mr. Mansfield said that he and Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois, the Republican leader, had apprised President Johnson of the situation and that Mr. Johnson had said the

issue was "a matter for the Senate to decide."

Mr. Mansfield said he would let another week go by and then call up for floor action a resolution approved 14 to 5 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last May 17.

This resolution would set up a Select Senate Committee on Intelligence Operations. Three of its nine members would be from the Armed Services Committee, three from the Appropriations Committee and three from the Foreign Relations Committee.

The fight centers on the admission of members of the Foreign Relations Committee to the exclusive group that has provided "legislative oversight" for the C.I.A. since the agency was created by the National Security Act of 1947.



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Senator Mike Mansfield

In the Senate, the watchdog subcommittee has been composed of seven members, drawn from the Armed Services Committee and the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. Mr. Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, also heads the watchdog subcommittee.

In the House, watch of the C.I.A. has been conducted by a subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee and a subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. The House subcommittees meet separately.

To avoid an open contest, Mr. Fulbright tried to get Mr. Russell, without legislation, to accept three members of the Foreign Relations Committee on the watchdog subcommittee on the ground that C.I.A. activities affected foreign policy. Mr. Russell refused, saying he did not have the authority to do this.

McCarthy Offers Plan

After this refusal, the Foreign Relations Committee adopted the resolution for a new select committee, which had been offered by Senator Eugene J. McCarthy, Democrat of Minnesota.

Mr. Russell announced that he would fight the resolution. An expansion of the watchdog subcommittee, he asserted, will jeopardize security by increasing the danger of leaks.

Senator Russell unquestionably had the votes to defeat the

resolution. But it was believed he might also be embarrassed by the number of votes for the resolution. Furthermore, it was generally agreed that Mr. Russell might have to yield the next time a C.I.A. operation went awry and aroused controversy.

In this context, Mr. Mansfield and others looked for a compromise. The one they favor would provide for the creation of a Foreign Relations subcommittee that would get regular briefings from the director of the C.I.A.

The hitch in this compromise is that it requires the cooperation of the President to be effective. The Foreign Relations Committee has the power to set up its own watchdog subcommittee, but only the President can direct the C.I.A. to give the subcommittee the kind of information it now gives the Russell group.

So far, President Johnson has shown no inclination to help Senators Fulbright and Mansfield.

Among those familiar with the way the Senate operates, not much credence is given to the fears expressed by the Russell group of security leaks. Instead, they see the members of the present watchdog subcommittee, most of whom are firmly entrenched in the power complex of the Senate, protecting one of their power bases from invasion.

Tus, Mr. Mansfield noted that there were 15 members on the two House Oversight subcommittees and yet there were no leaks there.

The great obstacle to compromise, he said, is that the members of the Russell group would like to keep the subcommittee as it is, and some of them believe is already too large.

The expansion of supervision, Mr. Mansfield said, does not involve a "vote of no confidence" in the C.I.A.

"Every one realizes the C.I.A. must be safeguarded," he said. "Everything it does could not and should not be open to Senate inspection."

Nevertheless, he said, the C.I.A. operates in an area that involves it in foreign policy, and therefore "some senior people" on the Foreign Relations Committee should be given representation.

"The purpose," he said, "is not to denigrate the C.I.A. but safeguard it."